is being destroyed before our eyes. We cannot witness this in silence and apathy and claim our hands are bloodless. We are a wandering tribe that needs to go home before home is gone. We should not continue standing in line to be admitted into spaces that don't want us there. We cannot continue to exist without clinics, political organizations, human services, and cultural institutions that *we* create to support, sustain, and affirm us.

Our mothers and fathers are waiting for us. Our sisters and brothers are waiting. Our communities are waiting for us to come home. They need our love, our talents and skills, and we need theirs. They may not understand everything about us, but they will remain ignorant, misinformed, and lonely for us, and we for them, for as long as we stay away, hiding in communities that have never really welcomed us or the gifts we bring.

I ask you brother: Does your mama *really* know about you? Does she *really* know what I am? Does she know I want to love her son, care for him, nurture and celebrate him? Do you think she'll understand? I hope so, because *I am* coming home. There is no place else to go that will be worth so much effort and love.

MISS EMILY'S GRANDSON WON'T HUSH HIS MOUTH

THE LAST TIME I SAW MY GRANDMOTHER WAS IN THE SUMMER OF 1986, in Columbia, South Carolina. I spent two cherished weeks with her. Columbia is the American ancestral home of my mother's family. To make this journey priceless, I brought along my niece, Shakira, who was seven at the time, and my nephew, Aaron, who was then two. It was their first time flying in a jet, but the last time they would see their great-grandmother alive. A year later, at the age of eighty-six, she died.

To all of her friends, neighbors, and church sisters, she was "Miss Emily," but to our family she was always "Mother," "Grandmother," or "Nana," names that are for us synonymous with faith, love, and selflessness.

During the summer of 1986, I was working on bringing forth my second chapbook of poetry, *Conditions*. I was getting editorial assistance from Joseph Beam, and I would pay for the printing with money I received from the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA). After my two previous applications to the NEA Literature Program had been rejected, my third application was approved and funded for fiscal year 1986.

I submitted my first application to the NEA Literature Program in 1983. The poems submitted with my application were largely Black-oriented and did not deal with my sexuality. My application was rejected. (But it should have been. The poems were largely regurgitations of nationalist rhetoric.) My second application was submitted in 1984 with non-political poetry that bordered on being Hallmark greeting card sentiments. The application was rejected. For my third